

Artist Jeff Koons to Attend Opening of His Tel Aviv Museum Exhibit

'Koons is an exceptional phenomenon in the world of art and culture, a persona which has far exceeded the world of art,' says the museum's chief curator

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Artist Jeff Koons poses in front of his creation 'Balloon Dog' (Yellow) before the opening of his retrospective at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York, on June 24, 2014. Credit: Lucas Jackson / REUTERS

A solo exhibition of Jeff Koons, one of the world's most famous, popular and controversial artists, will open on March 10 at the Tel Aviv Museum of Art. Koons will attend the opening ceremony.

Born in 1955, he belongs to the generation of artists who continued the American pop-art tradition while embracing an aesthetics that took to extremes the culture of pop and consumerism. In the early '90s, Koons documented his conjugal life with Ilona Staller (Cicciolina), depicting domestic pornographic scenes in a series of photographs, statues and prints, in which compositions were based on religious and classical painting.



A 1986 'Rabbit' sculpture by American pop artist Jeff Koons is on display in this image released by Christie's auction in New York, U.S., May 16, 2019. Credit: HANDOUT/Reuters

He perfected the embracing of popular culture imagery, exhibiting with extreme splendor statues of celebrities such as Michael Jackson and Lady Gaga, as well as toys and cartoon figures such as Popeye and the Green Giant.

Another famous statue of his is “Puppy,” which he presented at the documenta exhibition of contemporary art in 1992. This statue, made of colorful flowers, subsequently sold to the Guggenheim Foundation, which placed it outside the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao.

Another of his statues, “A Bouquet of Tulips,” was placed near the Petit Palais Museum in Paris in 2019 to commemorate a string of terror attacks in that city in 2015-2016, including the one at the Bataclan theater.



Bear and Policeman, 1988. Credit: © Jeff Koons

[Koons' work](#) is sold for millions of dollars. His “Orange Balloon Dog” sold in 2013 for \$58.4 million. His stainless-steel “Rabbit” sold last year for \$91.1 million.

The [Tel Aviv](#) Museum has said, “Koons’ works are produced with extreme perfectionism, which has bestowed them with an almost religious aura, making them desirable objects for art collectors and the general public alike.”



Hulk (Rock) by Jeff Koons. Credit: © Jeff Koons / Photo: Tom Powe

The exhibit will present 11 works, including statues and paintings, in a collaboration between the museum and the Jose Mugrabi collection, some of which was shown at the museum in 2013 at an exhibition called “Wanted.” Mugrabi owns the biggest collection of Andy Warhol paintings in the world, as well as works by Renoir, Picasso, Rodin, Daumier, Damien Hirst and Koons.

In response to the question of why it was important to exhibit Koons, the museum’s chief curator Doron Rabina said, “Koons is an exceptional phenomenon in the world of art and culture, a persona which has far exceeded the world of art. He has changed basic assumptions regarding what constitutes art and what is considered an art object. He’s an artist who has fused into his works economic and artistic-cultural values, creating unprecedented new ways of thinking that are in many ways a sign of our era.”

Will this be an exhibition displayed previously? “No, it was designed specifically for our museum from the Mugrabi collection. We’re in dialogue with Koons regarding all aspects of the exhibition. Some works will be shown for the first time ever.”



The sculpture 'Michael Jackson and Bubbles,' by artist Jeff Koons, is shown on display in the chateau de Versailles in Versailles, outside Paris, on September 10, 2008. Credit: AP

The name of the exhibition – “Absolute Value” – touches on the [key questions posed by Koons](#) regarding symbolic and financial value, as well as the worth of art, says Rabina.

He refers to two quotes by Koons, who has said that his work is a support system for people so that they feel better about themselves. The other relates to Koons telling middle-class people to hug the things they love, not to disengage from what they are. He called on them not to erase their identity in a quest to belong to an upper class.

Koons lives and works in both New York City and his hometown of York, Pennsylvania.

Rubina said he expected a very large turnout of visitors to the exhibition.



A visitor passes beneath a photograph by artist Jeff Koons at the Barbican Centre in central London, October 10, 2007. Credit: REUTERS